



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

ATTORNEY GENERAL KWAME RAOUL INAUGURATION ADDRESS
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Good afternoon. First, I would like to give thanks and honor to God for His mercy and generosity.

It's my honor to acknowledge the presence of Rev. Otis Moss III, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ, the greatest church this side of the River Jordan. Thank you for being here today, thank you for your prayer this morning and thank you for reminding us in church yesterday to get a spiritual refill.

I must also recognize two people in the judiciary, each of whom I refer to as my 'big sister.' A fellow Trinitarian, Federal District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman, who administered my oath four years ago. And my other big sister, Illinois Supreme Court Justice Joy Cunningham, who swore me in moments ago. I offer up my heartfelt gratitude to you for your steadfast mentorship through the years. I want to give a shout out to biological big sisters who were unable to make it Edwidge and Ninaj Raoul.

So I was told I only had three minutes to deliver my remarks, I think I am going to fail at my first task in my second term. However in the interest of time, the entirety of my remarks will be the Thank You section of my speech. First, my wife, Dr. Lisa Moore, who is always by my side. Thank you sweetheart.

I had the distinct honor of watching my wife be a true hero during our unprecedented pandemic. Day after day, she would faithfully head into the hospital, at a time when many of us were safe in our homes. I've watched her be a hero one night early in my first term while we were dining at Gibson's, and she administered lifesaving care to a woman who started choking on a steak a table away from us..

The cool part of this for me now is that we can get a table at Gibson's when I forget to make the reservation because she is now a celebrity there.

To my son Che, who was unfortunately robbed of a college graduation ceremony when the pandemic hit notwithstanding the fact he had earned honors for his academic performance at Lake Forest College.

Son, you have amazing character!

Che had the strength of character to quit his first job as a manager at a fulfillment center because he didn't support having to impose discipline quotas and unfair working conditions on his subordinates. Che embodies the spirit of my Workplace Protection Bureau, which has done an amazing job of protecting Illinois workers from misclassification, wage theft, discrimination and unsafe working conditions.

In Illinois we protect working families. And I thank you, Che, for affirming that spirit.

My daughter, Mizan, who could not be here, recently graduated from the University of Missouri and now desires to attend law school and become a public interest lawyer. I was so pleased to drive into the state of Missouri to attend her graduation last year, but not nearly as happy as I was to drive out of Missouri and get her the hell out of a state that doesn't respect a woman's right to make decisions about her body.

Thank you, Mizan for reminding me of how dedicated I have to be in protecting those rights.

I think as highly of my daughter as I do my Solicitor General, who has expertly argued before the DC Circuit Court of Appeals that the ERA *is* the 28th Amendment of our Constitution. I want my daughter to someday be able to hold up her right hand swear under oath to protect the United States Constitution, but I want that to be a Constitution that protects *her* as an equal.

My stepson, John, is a student at Morehouse College. Pastor Moss, he is a Morehouse Man in the making! On the heels of George Floyd's murder, he and my daughter had vigorous debates with me on issues connected to police reform. Those debates influenced me to take action and convene law enforcement partners to agree on language in the SAFE-T Act that would lead to greater trust of law enforcement, better training for officers and greater accountability for bad actors.

In other words, this SAFE-T Act language enhances our ability to maintain constitutional and professional policing throughout the state of Illinois and I want to thank the Chiefs of Police, the Sheriff's and the State's Attorneys for coming to the table in good faith.

My niece and goddaughter, Sydney Jackson, graduated with honors in computer engineering from Johns Hopkins University and then got her masters in computer science from there as well. Sydney has been instrumental in educating me about the good and bad of technology. On account of conversations with her, I am proud that we are leading an effort along with other state AG offices to investigate social media platforms that pose potential dangers to our children. I am also proud that we are leaders in investigating the criminal use of online platforms to monetize the proceeds of organized retail crime for other criminal use.

I was happy to attend Sydney's graduation a few years back. During that ceremony, the commencement speaker, Bryan Stevenson, delivered a powerful address.

"There is a justice deficit in this country," he said. "We have a criminal justice system that will treat you better if you are rich and guilty than if you are poor and innocent."

Those words ring relevant today as we prepare for arguments before our state's high court with regards to the pre-trial fairness act. Consistent with our constitutional presumption of innocence, we should not hold people in jail simply because they are poor. We cannot continue to criminalize poverty.

Importantly, I want to also thank my outstanding staff. They say that when you're an incumbent running for re-election, your best campaigning is what you have done while in office.

There were certain matters that I expected to take on at the outset of my term in 2019. I knew we had to begin the implementation stage of a consent decree with the Chicago Police department and work towards a model of constitutional policing. I knew we had to continue work on behalf of survivors of abuse in the Catholic Church. I knew we had to continue protecting communities from sexually violent people. I knew we would protect consumers from fraud, price gouging, the opioid crisis and predatory

student loans. And I knew we would have to fight policies that were put in place by the incumbent president at the time I was sworn in.

Many of those policies threatened environmental protections, others encouraged inhumane treatment of immigrants, and some violated the rights of members of the LGBTQ community. I also knew we would have to fight the rise in hate. My staff has risen to the task on all things expected.

But I've got to tell you that what impressed me most about my staff was their ability to take on all of the things unexpected. I did not expect that we would be partnering with other state AGs and other lawyers nationally to literally save our democracy.

And then there was the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic that would change our lives in the spring of 2020.

Our Workplace Rights Bureau had to rise to the occasion to protect those whom we learned to call essential workers from unsafe working conditions. Whether in-person or virtually, my staff also had to battle countless frivolous legal actions that sought to undermine life-saving emergency protocols that had been put in place by our Governor and public health officials—policies, which have demonstrably saved lives in Illinois, as compared to surrounding states who were more lax.

We were forced into this predicament while largely working from remote locations, which meant we were heavily dependent on technology. We certainly did not expect at that moment for our office to be hit with a crippling cyberattack. I am proud to say that that ransomware attack did not stop my staff's work! I want to sincerely thank you for your resilience and ability to adapt and continue representing the People of the State of Illinois.

I am also very proud of the partnerships we've developed with other law enforcement agencies at all levels. We are One Team!

Notwithstanding the fact that I joke that I'm currently the favorite defendant of many state's attorneys, I think it's important for the public to know that we've enjoyed a good history of working together. I work closely with state's attorneys throughout Illinois on the opioid crisis, prosecuting murder, violent crime and sophisticated criminal schemes, such as organized retail crime. I am thankful for partnerships with prosecutors and law enforcement agencies at the federal, state and local levels.

I want to recognize and thank U.S. Attorney Greg Harris for allowing our office to partner with his to fight violent crime and also protect children from online predators. Since 2019, we have also partnered with the United States Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center on multiple training sessions regarding how to detect and prevent mass shootings in schools, places of worship and other public places.

The desperate need for these trainings hit home on July 4th of 2022, during the Highland Park Parade. One of our own prosecutors and his wife were wounded during that shooting—one took a bullet, the other was injured by shrapnel. What was amazing was that prosecutor's desire to return to work. He actually emailed his supervisor the night he was shot and asked for a single day off! He was head of our statewide grand jury unit that has investigated and prosecuted gun trafficking cases.

I believe he perfectly exemplifies the dedication our staff.

As I reflect on the Highland Park shooting, I can't help but reflect on two other mass shootings that took place mere weeks later. One mass shooting was in Washington Park, on the South Side of

Chicago a block away from where I raise my children. The other was in Garfield Park, on Chicago's West Side. Neither of those mass shootings received the same level of media attention as the Highland Park shooting.

As a matter of fact, it wasn't until recently that we started to refer to such tragedies as "mass shootings" because of where they occurred. We all need to look in the mirror and ask why that is the case.

Illinois and the nation were traumatized by the horrific event that struck Highland Park. People, including myself, were rightfully shocked that such extreme violence had visited a place like Highland Park. But there should be no neighborhood where we expect gun violence to hit.

We shouldn't be surprised when shootings occur in downtown Chicago and in the River North neighborhood where I currently live, when we've tolerated them and expected them to happen on the West and South Sides of Chicago, in Rockford, East St Louis, the East Side of Springfield and other economically disadvantaged areas of our state for decades.

I'll say about gun violence what I've said about the opioid and heroin crises: We weren't troubled when we thought they were quarantined to poor inner-city neighborhoods. We actually tolerated the impact of heroin and opioid addiction until it spread to more affluent areas. That should not be our normal and we should be ashamed.

My final thank you is to someone not here today—my mother. My mom was a praying woman and a devout Catholic from Haiti. My mother made her transition months after I began my first term as Attorney General. While on her deathbed, my mother shared with me why I had been given my middle name, "Yves."

I had always assumed that I'd been given that name to honor some distant relative. The truth is that I had been named after Saint Yves, the patron saint of lawyers and abandoned children and the advocate of the poor. My mom explained that she recited the Prayer of St. Yves to me every night after I was born:

"Help us to love justice as you loved it. Help us to know how to defend our rights without prejudice to others, in seeking above all, reconciliation and peace. Rouse up defenders to plead the cause of the oppressed so that justice may be done in love."

I view that as my responsibility as Attorney General, to serve the abandoned children. And in Illinois, we have abandoned our children.

Gun violence has surpassed auto accidents as the number one killer of children. I'm asking our legislature to give me the power to go after those in the industry on behalf of the children we've abandoned.

Do not pass half measures and go home.

Do not surrender to the politics of self-preservation on behalf of our children. Please do not.

I want to thank you all for tolerating me. I went way beyond three minutes but it's on behalf of our abandoned children.

I want to just end by saying, this is truly the work of my life and I have more work to do.

May God Bless our great State of Illinois. May God Bless the United States of America. And May God Bless and help us protect our abandoned children.